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Jack and Joann Branson

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ON THE PENINSULA:



CDR Jack Branson illustrates a point about his bonsai trees.

Saturday afternoon in Carmel and the rain and hail seems to worsen as the number of parking spaces decreased. Then, miraculously, a space right at Del Dono Court at 5th and Dolores. The rain slackened and allowed me to duck into the Garden Gallery and visit with owner's Jack and Joann Branson. . . a most happy occasion.

The Garden Gallery houses not only the artistic works of many nationally known artists and local talent but also a bonsai specialty shop. The Branson's business venture began in 1972 with "ichi-ban bonsai",

which offers a complete selection of tools, books, containers and many mature specimen bonsai trees. What is unique about the shop and its proud owners begins with a warm laugh and a friendly greeting. Soon I found that Jack and Joann Branson and their five children are a special Navy family. A cohesive group that faces every new challenge and conquers it with hard work, faith, good humor. . . and sheer numbers!

Jack Branson is a smiling, personable man whose easy manner makes each browser in the shop a special guest. Born in

San Diego, his early years were spent moving all over the country with his family in the true Navy fashion. A graduate of Annapolis High School, he walked down the street a few days later and joined the Class of '50 at the Naval Academy. Today, we can find CDR Branson instructing Aerodynamics in the Aviation Safety Program at the Naval Postgraduate School and serving as "guiding light" to the family venture into the business world.

Joann Branson is a wisp of a gal with seeming inexhaustable patience and energy. She is a native of Butler, Pennsylvania, on the banks of the Conoquenessing Creek. The couple met in Florida and after a whirlwind courtship were married in Jacksonville in 1953. Today, a bundle of perpetual motion with a quick witted gift of gab; quick to laugh and to reassure. The chief "organizer" of a husband and five active children, a home, a business, and her own hectic schedule. . . she seems the calm in the midst of impending chaos. Joann radiates an active, learning mind and as she tells stories of mini-disasters at home, or her zany school experiences, she laughs, ". . . our lives are to be lived!"

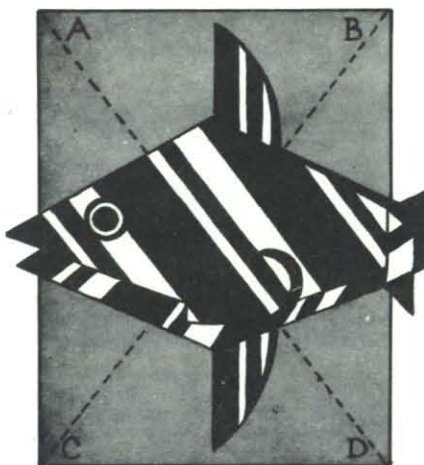
Joann is currently involved in classes in Art, Speech and English Composition at Monterey Peninsula College. She is further committed to her Christian Faith and with the Bible Study Fellowship, an interdenominational program of Bible study which meets weekly at the Carmel Presbyterian Church. This is an extensive course which requires five years for completion. Joann is deeply engaged in the work of the Catholic Church and eventually hopes to use her talents and energy in youth-oriented Bible study.

The Branson home in Del Monte Fairways is a constant bustle, and they wouldn't have it any other way. The oldest offspring, John III, is a member of the Class of '77 at the Naval Academy. At home you might confront. . . Jeff, a senior at Monterey High School. . . Jim, a freshman at the Robert Louis Stevenson School. . . Jill, a 7th grader at Junipero Serra School or Jay, a 5th grader at the same school. If you have noticed a tendency toward the letter "J" it will not surprise you to meet the Branson dogs, Jolly and Josie, and the three felines, Joe Cool, and J. Gutsy. The tank of tropical fish shall remain unnamed!

Jack Branson's 23½ year Navy career has taken the family on many cross country journeys. His early career included flight training and tours with a fighter squadron and many WestPac cruises with an attack squadron. He earned a Master's Degree at the Naval Postgraduate School. Later, he taught Nuclear Engineering at the Naval Academy. CDR Branson also served as Weapons Officer aboard the carrier FDR,

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JACK AND JOANN BRANSON



CDR and Mrs. Jack Branson are a military couple with community ties.

shop is licensed by the California Department of Agriculture and is the only bonsai specialty shop on the Peninsula. The Bransons are members of Bonsai Clubs International (BCI), the American Bonsai Society (ABS), and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. A true family effort, you might find any or all of the Bransons at the shop at any time.

Like the family, the shop is ill-content to remain static. . . and the Garden Gallery is the result. Joining the graceful bonsai trees are the works of fifteen to twenty artists, both local and nationally known. Original oils, acrylics, ink sketches and prints. So enjoyable is the new undertaking that the owners hope to expand their shop to include more print, and perhaps to eventually become involved in publishing prints. In preparation for this future challenge they have become new members of the Professional Picture Framer's Association.

We chatted till late in the afternoon as nearby the rain and hail played havoc with the Crosby Pro-Am in Pebble Beach. The Branson family was planning a bridal shower for later that evening and somehow I had the impression that the skies would clear before the first guest arrived!

Cheryl Kier

spent a tour in Washington at the Naval Air Systems Command and was on the MACV Staff in Saigon for one year before returning to Monterey.

With thoughts of retiring with his family on the Peninsula came the challenge of a small business venture. Jack met an amateur gardener with 150 mature bonsai trees for sale and after combing the area for a suitable location, the "ichi-ban Bonsai" was born. Later, more varieties of bonsai were added, special tools, containers and literature for the bonsai gardener. A call to the Small Business Administration in San Francisco, and a course in Business Administration at MPC and the determined

family was ready to begin a successful new adventure in the business world.

That was almost two years ago, now the

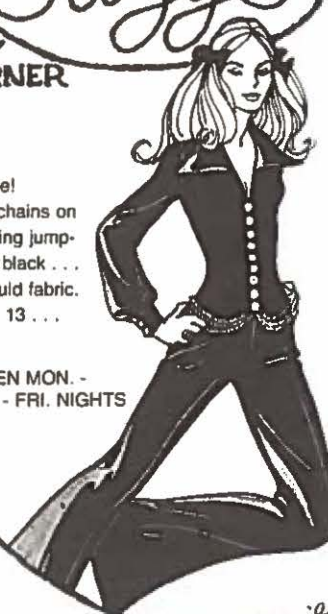


Mrs. Joann Branson pauses with a smile during her work at the Garden Gallery.

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